



NABO News

The Magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners
Issue 3 June 2024

**Closing waterways is
our last resort says
Canal & River Trust**
**NABO's facility
closure list**
**Decline of cruising on
inland waterways**



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Rep vacancy — can you fill it?

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The magazine of the National Association of Boat Owners

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Next NABO News copy date

Articles, letters, photos and cartoons are most welcome. Please email your contributions to nabonews@nabo.org.uk or post to the Editor by July 6th 2024.

NABO Calendar 2024

The Council meetings in 2024 will be on:
13th July 2024 Zoom, 14th September 2024 Zoom,
16th November 2024 after AGM at Tamworth
Cruising Club

Cover photo

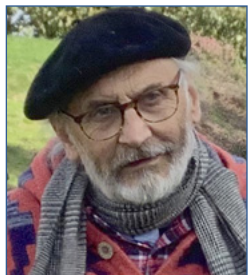
This month cover shows the FBW cruise past the House of Commons. © Photo by Kev Maslin. Please email your photos for the front cover of NABO News to the Editor, as JPG, ideally portrait with a file size of 2MB or larger.



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As I was thinking about writing this editorial the news broke of a general election in six weeks time. I suppose you can pretty much ignore what legislation may have been on the books until the result is declared. Parliament will be dissolved and much will be promised before our votes are cast.

I will still be keeping an eye on Parliamentary proceedings that may

getting a Radio 4 interview slot. However I feel the end result was to alienate factions of our diverse community. Some continuous cruisers (CCRS) pushing the idea that they are subsidising those of us with a home mooring does nothing to aid the campaign for fairness. As a small group the CCRS need the support of the larger boating community which, on balance I believe, favours a general increase in licence and mooring fees rather than targeting sub groups. I live on the canal, partly in a house and partly on a small narrowboat, my end of garden mooring fee goes straight to CRT. Consequently they make considerably more from my 10% increase in mooring fees compared to increasing marina mooring fees, of which CRT only get a percentage. Such is life. Am I poorer as a result of the changes? Certainly, as my income is fixed. It will probably mean that my boating days are reduced. I appreciate that I will not be homeless but I didn't buy a house on a canal only to watch others enjoying the travelling life.

We are one community however we choose to take to the water. I would urge anyone giving interviews to be very careful in their use of language, reporters have no allegiance to any group they just need a story and most don't let truth get in the way.

Enjoy the warmer weather and cruising our wonderful network.

Time for Change?

Editor **John Sadler**

affect boaters but between now and the next issue it's unlikely that any new legislation will be even thought of let alone written. Most campaigns that were successful in generating a debate will need to be restarted.

We will be setting out on our summer cruise before July 4th and reliant on a postal vote. The Post Office operates a scheme called 'Poste Restante', a service for travellers who don't have a permanent address in a location but still wish to receive mail. Not all Post Offices will accept mail. In the past we have found a PO counter that partakes in the scheme within walking distance of a mooring then requested letters to be dispatched. We have no idea where we will be, as all of our ideas so far have been affected by emergency closures or urgent temporary maintenance.

Where does the election hiatus leave the Fund Britain's Waterways campaign? Since we ultimately need to get the ear of politicians there may be some benefit in highlighting the issues to the general public. All parties will be keen on supporting issues in the public arena for the next six weeks, at least.

Well done to the NBTA for

It's May and the UK's weather has taken a turn for the better. The day boats from the local boatyard have crew that are slightly less well wrapped up as they motor past. Hire boat businesses seem to be doing a better trade too, with boats from at least ten different bases regularly passing us now.

Regularly returning too, as the next set of locks are closed for repair for the week, with one hirer not amused that they hadn't been forewarned. Many boaters are of course signed up to CRT's stoppage alerts. The format of these is currently being re-designed to enable the addition of photos so look out for this change, due sometime in the summer.

The warm temperature has inspired the vegetation here to put in a luxuriant appearance. Visible towpath has shrunk to a few inches, nettles and cow parsley are already waist high. I'm hoping that CRT's new vegetation contractors are at least keeping lock sides and approaches clear, a repeat of last year's problems is not what boaters should be finding.

The narrowboats who had made such an effort through unplanned stoppages and flooding to get to the Fund Britain's Waterways Westminster flotilla were rewarded with a lovely day on the Thames. Let's hope that their efforts outside Parliament will not be unremembered by whoever is elected next.

Unplanned stoppages all over the canal system continue in regularity as is the norm now. What a sentence to have to write! What does appear to be different to the norm though is CRT's response and repair rate. There's a noticeable turn of speed, with navigations opened again in many instances with commendable swiftness. Even the massive landslide at Easenhall is now open for

boats, albeit at certain times only. Well done CRT.

Finally, my brain did a cartwheel seeing what it thought was the usual media story of sold house, bought boat, cheaper living costs. I was about to scroll past but no, this was the reverse, a Thames' liveaboard had realised that with rising mooring costs, it was cheaper for her to sell the boat and go back to a house!

For many years now, government funding support has been repeatedly cut to all the major navigation authorities that rely on government support for effective maintenance of their waterways. Not only CRT but also the EA and Scottish Canals are more than feeling the pinch, evidenced in deteriorating structures and boat licence fee hikes. Boaters are beginning to give up boating, finding it less enjoyable as well as more and more expensive. It is evident that a tipping point will be reached on the affordability of boat ownership; there will also surely be a canal and river maintenance tipping point if nothing changes.



Chair **Anne Husar**

Help needed

The NABO Council is looking for a member based on the Thames who is interested in representing us on EA's Thames Waterways Forum. The person preferably should also be involved in one of the RUGs (River User Groups). There are a couple of formal meetings each year (normally both in-person in Reading and also virtual) and various subgroups are formed. We also try to get all boating organisations together when appropriate. For more information please contact our present representative, Mike Rodd, at mike.rodd@nabo.org.uk



An unwelcome but very noticeable change in the last few years is an increase in the number of boats sitting on the bottom. Pedants will say they are not sunken boats because they are not underwater but simply calling them boats sitting on the bottom is not sufficient because a grounded boat sits on the bottom so please let's call them sunken boats. Is that the same as an abandoned boat? No, but inevitably the latter will lead to the former so they are closely related.

The Scourge of Sunken Boats... ..and abandoned boats that will soon sink

Vice-chair **Rob Neff**

Are there more? Yes there are, based on casual observation. It used to be unusual to see a boat in that state but not now. Why are there more? There are more boats on the cut largely because there are more people living on the cut. There are more older boats on the cut largely because people in the whole country generally have less money but more importantly bricks and mortar rents have gone sky high. The deluge of articles, TV programmes and social media vlogs has led to living aboard being more and more popular. A

trend likely to continue. There are more wooden and GRP cruisers on the cut and these are the ones that seem to sink most. Cheaper to buy on the whole, harder to maintain (especially wooden ones) and less likely to be suitable for living aboard compared to a narrow boat. Maybe some boats are becoming disposable, like clothing and furniture and electrical items?

But it is not just older and less-used boats that are going down. I remember my neighbour's narrow boat on Blomfield Road in Little Venice going down. A beautiful boat in excellent condition. And insurers are getting tougher on paying out. There was a recent case of an insurer citing 'micro pitting' on a narrow boat as proof of poor maintenance and thus not paying out. And the BBC program 'Rip Off Britain' is telling the tale of a couple's narrow boat sinking in Manchester during the recent storms that the insurer won't pay out on.

It's a bit of a perfect storm. More people new to boating coming to the waterways and more of those people having less money to spend buying and maintaining a boat. Also, many boaters are doing less and less of their own maintenance.

But what message does a sunken boat give about the waterways? A very negative message which will put off people with money to spend but more desperate people will not be put off. Sunken boats also make a mockery of the wellbeing message as they are the epitome of anti-wellbeing, giving off a message of danger, stress, lack of care, risk, pollution and abandonment.

CRT will rightly hold the owner to account. But leaving a half submerged boat on the cut for two years, with kids playing on the roof and able to go inside, is not the answer.



Fly on the wall

Observes proceedings at the Council meeting in May.

A lively meeting took place in person for those who could attend and remotely by Zoom. Some exasperation was expressed of meetings with CRT and not receiving answers to questions on future plans etc. after 2027. Richard Parry has stated that there is only about a £10 million per annum funding gap. It was felt that CRT have been meeting with us and indicating that they take note but services and infrastructure have been reducing. It was suggested that NABO represents the views of very few boaters: most don't give a damn. It was felt that stakeholder involvement over recent years through various forums have been silenced to some extent to allow CRT to present the image they want to promote.

It was pointed out that CRT accept that vulnerability exists within the boating community and do provide a welfare organisation to assist. Nothing is happening at the moment on energy support. Wiltshire council did pay some boaters outside of their area but later stated that was a mistake. Council were informed that a position statement had been put to CRT on the subject of less than 14 day off- side mooring on the Gloucester and Sharpness Canal. NABO is still waiting for a reply to all the points raised, future action is likely. Matthew Symonds of CRT has commented on the new Terms and Conditions stating that they only applied to those without a home mooring.

As part of the Fund Britain's Waterways the Cruise to Parliament was not as great a success as hoped, partly because of stoppages only 17 boats got to the event. There was also a train strike that day affecting support. There is a stall at Crick. There will be no more cruises this year. The message coming out of CRT is that there is no catastrophic funding gap. The Keep Canals Alive campaign is also quiet. CRT are confident that they can fill the funding gap in the next two years. There are GoFundMe QR codes around the system. Some customer service facilities have been closed with no intention to re-instate

but cruising plans have not been updated. The problems of fly tipping and vandalism continue. The use of cameras to detect vandalism was suggested once again. A comparison of CRT's Terms and Conditions has been circulated. NABO will liaise with CRT on the differences. There was concern about the lack of reference to discounts, particularly for electric boats. Reports on recent meetings have been circulated to council. A new system is being installed by CRT to present the Stoppage and Winter Works programme. The chosen implementation will lose all the history of the current system which will not allow a comparison of closures unless CRT respond to an FOI request for the information. There should be an archive of these records. The next winter stoppages are now in first draft with a comment date of 3 June 2024.

Boater Satisfaction Survey is out now to a sample of boaters. It was reported that it is a dreadfully formulated questionnaire. It was noted that there are in excess of 2500 followers on X (Twitter) now. CRT seem to have been monitoring comments and are very defensive of criticism. A conversation concerning facilities for continuous cruisers was highlighted as offensive to CRT although NABO try to fact check where possible and in this case have photographic evidence.

NABO will continue to make use of freedom of expression and comment on all social media to our audience, the boaters. A post about sunken boats has been put up recently and this appeared to have the effect of having the boat removed. It was agreed that the Facebook page is going well and reaches many people. The Welfare Officers Report has been emailed to council. The Thames waterways meeting was well organised with notice of papers and good discussion. NABO has been frustrated by some of the recent appointments within EA. There is a need for a member to represent NABO on the Thames groups. See appeal for a representative. The webmaster was thanked for his hard work in transferring the website, he is happy with the new domain.

Welfare Officer's Report

By Ken Hyllins

I have been quite busy overseeing various reasonable adjustments for boaters.

A complaint has been raised with Richard Parry in respect of the 5% surcharge for Continuous Cruisers. This was formed after consulting with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The EHRC protects equality across 9 grounds including age and disability, they advised me that in my situation the surcharge could be regarded as indirect discrimination by the trust against me.

The reply from CRT totally missed the point which I was raising and was absolutely unsatisfactory. I will be writing to the EHRC to register a complaint of indirect discrimination against me and other similar boaters so that they can investigate the implementation of a selective surcharge under the Equality Act 2010 as amended.

I will also be submitting a second complaint to the commission about the expected distances that CRT are expecting boaters to travel to obtain water, sanitation services and waste disposal, again this would be considered as indirect discrimination against me and other boaters in a comparable position.

Disabled Boaters Forum

By Ken Hyllins

I attended the disabled boaters forum on behalf of NABO and of course my own interests.

There was great optimism on the improvement of towpaths in the Market Harborough area, where a two kilometre stretch had been improved from external grants.

There has also been towpath improvement at Loughborough where another two kilometre stretch of towpath has been upgraded. Matthew Symonds said that there is scope for other grants to upgrade areas of towpath. There was a general theme of the need for increased accessibility to the towpath.

The reduced grant we expect will cause less money being available for non-navigational expenditure, while work is required to ameliorate the affects of climate change.

Sabrina Young of CRT will review the length of recorded messages when customer services are called. Matthew gave figures from the census survey, to which only 25% of boaters replied, disclosing that there are 19% continuous cruisers with a disability. The next CRT census is ready to go out, will it gain more than a 25% response?

Northamptonshire council social services section is making attempts to help the boating and travelling community within their geographical catchment area, which is a good starting point.

The issue was raised that it takes too long to complete and obtain reasonable adjustments

(this again is to be looked at). Matthew stated there was an increase in the take up of reasonable adjustments.

During any questions I raised the point that if life is better by water as CRT states, why are so many services being closed, pointing out that if you are an able bodied person this could be a challenge, so it is an even greater challenge to the less abled. The expectation of cruising eight hours for a service such as water or Elsan disposal might be acceptable in CRT'S eyes but in the eyes of the Equality and Human Rights Commission it would be indirect discrimination to a boater such as myself and many others. Matthew made light of this, saying that we would not penalise a boater on his moving pattern if he stays within an area to obtain services. I responded that you are penalising boaters for just such a thing.

I responded that you are penalising boaters for just such a thing and went on to say that if you are not going to penalise boaters for the need to obtain services perhaps you should make all the welfare and support officers aware. This did cause a London boater to question Matthew about the lack of services in London, he had to go to and from services. Matthew said it would be considered, at the discretion of CRT, as to accuracy of their moving pattern. A conflict of expectation as equality should play a part in this matter.

I raised the point that CRT needs to do more to get the deserving people on reasonable adjustments as at present it seems to be too difficult for boaters to achieve. A well guarded secret.

Facilities

NABO attempts to keep an updated list of closures that are reported by boaters and discusses these with Matthew Symonds at our regular meetings with him. Here's a run down of CRT's latest replies. *Ed: Feedback is welcomed on your experiences.*

Berkhamsted

The Elsan disposal is within the Old Mill pub that has been shut (for some time) by the landlord. CRT are in dispute with the landlord about the responsibility for maintaining the facility. The issue is currently with their legal team so is sub judice but it is not their intention that this facility is removed. The bin store in Berkhamsted had to be removed as it wasn't on CRT land, they are working closely with the local council to try and find a suitable alternative. The water point is not affected and is working.

Bettisfield on the Llangollen

There is just a water point now. There were bins but these were removed. New legislation has been introduced in Wales requiring separate waste and recycling (even though over 80% of CRT waste is recycled through separation off site by the contractors). CRT has no additional resource to support these changes in Wales so some sites have been consolidated to provide segregated waste and recycling and additional servicing. The removal of this refuse site does not impact CRT meeting the maximum cruising distance standard between facilities. *Ed: NABO would welcome feedback on your experience of cruising distance between services.*

Cranfleet Lock, Trent

There is a refuse point, with no other services. CRT had issues with the deterioration of the access road (particularly after it was underwater for large parts of this winter) which meant that Biffa withdrew their collections until it could be repaired. There are other boater refuse points very close, so CRT are considering what to do. If the access road can be improved or if they have to consider the alternative provision is sufficient or if they need to find an alternative site for refuse in this area.

Stone update

A potential alternative site has been identified, after access permission to the original site was removed by the landowner. This new site requires planning permission and is currently being worked on by the planning team.

Northwich Town Services

CRT are working on updating a few of the boater guides so that any changes to facilities are updated. That may be why they are temporarily unavailable. CRT own very little land on river navigations so it's harder to install refuse sites. If necessary, additional collections may be required at Anderton if there are no options to install additional facilities on the Weaver.

Ed: Until recently a part of Northwich's historic Navigation Yard could have been repurposed.

Selby dog waste bins

Dog bins are not essential Customer Service Facilities so CRT took the decision, as a Trust, in 2023 to largely remove public refuse and dog waste bins due to cost, and to communicate the message for people to take their rubbish and dog waste home. Since that decision CRT has monitored rubbish on the towpath and have not seen any significant increase, so the 'take your rubbish home' message is largely being followed. *Ed: The outskirts of Birmingham must be the exception, I couldn't help noticing the amount of litter during our Easter visit.*

Hop Pole CSF at Bridge 59

The water has been turned off by the pub, whose supply is metered. CRT is in discussion with them to see if it can be restored.

Burscough

The waste bins at Burscough are an example of selective reportage, which gives the impression that refuse facilities have been taken away. Unfortunately, the bin store here was being vandalised on a daily basis, so CRT closed the site and moved it one mile further along the canal. Access to refuse bins is still available but the location has been moved a short distance to a site that is more secure and less prone to vandalism. Therefore there hasn't been a reduction in refuse provision, just a change of location for good reason.

Avon and Severn

Helen Hutt

The river opened to through-navigation between Stratford upon Avon and Tewkesbury towards the end of April—too late for many businesses to benefit from the Easter weekend.

Open, that is, only to boats up to 11 ft wide, because Harvington Lock still has one broken bottom gate which is strapped shut and awaiting repair. There is still a lot of silt in and around locks and a considerable amount of flood debris on weir barriers. I took a trip from Evesham to Stratford back in mid-May and saw only a handful of other boats on the move, due in part to the fact that the Stratford Canal was closed at Lowsonford. The river is still beautiful, though, and could do with more visitors!



East Anglia

Peter Earley

By the time you read this we should be on our summer cruise down to the flesh pots of Ely and beyond but even the best of plans go awry.

We seem to have had months of the Great Ouse being in flood with just two very short windows of 'Caution', one of which we were able to take advantage. At the beginning of May the river dropped into 'Caution' again and we prepared ourselves to be away for a couple of months when the Environment Agency issued a stoppage notice for Brownshill Lock stopping any transit between the Bedford Ouse and the Ely section. The latest news is that one of the gear wheels carrying the chain that supports the massive counterweight for the guillotine gate has failed. In an all familiar tale, the EA don't keep spares of these, despite there being some 20 in use on the river and so it will have to be manufactured specially.



Around the regions with NABO's regional reps

So Brownshill will be closed for several weeks. Add to this the many over-running stoppages on the Nene and the terrible siltation on the short tidal section between Salters Lode and Denver, all of course caused by the serious amount of rain we've had this winter.

If any visitor does make it over here, several visitor moorings are still closed. The upstream mooring at Denver has now been completely removed but at least has been replaced by one just around the corner by the services. Silt Fen mooring remains out of use but there is a suitably piled edge immediately downstream for those who like a quiet mooring. And for a further bit of good news, The Jenyns Arms at Denver is due to reopen following renovation by the EA.

Heading upstream Toms Hole visitor mooring on the River Lark remains closed as does Queen Adelaide near Ely and much further upstream at Great Barford the moorings have been closed due to damage from flooding. There is a short length of GOBA moorings opposite to enable a visit to The Anchor pub but I understand the Local Authority who own the mooring have repairs in hand for this very popular spot.

If you have planned to visit the Fens this year then a phone call to the EA or Northampton Marina to find the current situation would be sensible.

River Trent

Nick Roberts

The Trent Link Reopens!

After record high river levels through the winter and even into April, and the four month extended repair of the special Keadby "sliding" railway bridge by Network Rail effectively closed the "Link" in and out of the



Yorkshire and North East Region from the East Midlands Region, its perhaps not surprising, (but disappointing nevertheless), that boating numbers have been ridiculously low on the tidal Trent so far this year. Just two boats moved on and off the Chesterfield Canal over the first May bank holiday...

But things are finally on the “up”, The Keadby Bridge opened yesterday....and like fizzy water from a bottle, a stream of boats escaped the North East.

There is news that the Leeds “River Lock” will stagger on for yet another season to allow access to the Leeds Liverpool Canal implying that “The Grand Ring” is perhaps an option this year after all. The Ferrybridge Floodlock repair on the Aire and Calder will, it was recently announced, be

opened occasionally to let boats through until it is fixed. Perhaps next month?

From the south, the serious silting of the Trent south of Nottingham has almost gone... and the Trent and Mersey is open!

The Canal and River Trust Regional Directors of both the East Midlands, and the Yorkshire & North East have at least agreed this month to a target of keeping the four tidal locks manned and open for each daylight tide between April and September. Even if it has to be by using more volunteers (such as myself!) to keep them open as CRT lock staff have declined here in the north.

A sign of the downwards spiral, Diminishing Staff = Diminishing Cruising Boats = Diminishing Staff. But then cruising boat numbers are dropping everywhere aren't they? Do we know why?



Energy Compensation is still being pursued.

Only 500 signatures so far, which signifies a lack of support from the boating community,

So please add your support to the petition which you can sign here. Every signature counts, please add yours!

you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/get-vital-ps600-energy-bill-support-to-remaining-off-grid-households-currently-excluded-from-support

We're also looking to grow our campaigns team, because the more voices calling for energy justice, the more likely there'll be change. We need members to share posters and leaflets, speak to their friends. You can get in touch on ukboatersforenergyjustice@gmail.com or 07483 377346.

This isn't just about a one-off support scheme, it's also about the challenges faced by people who live slightly different lives and don't fit neatly into boxes, and challenging the Government to listen to these groups when making their plans and policies.

For more information please contact Alex on alex@devizesanddistrict.foodbank.org.uk

Environment Agency Latest

The Environment Agency(EA) wanted us to let you know that their Navigation Boat Registration Charges consultation is now live. Have your say, the consultation will run until midnight on 9 August 2024.

You will find the Navigation charges consultation page, together with all the relevant information on Citizen Space – consult.environment-agency.gov.uk/environment-and-business/charges-proposal-boat-reg

The EA really value your views, please encourage as many people as possible to respond.

They are planning to hold two virtual drop-in sessions to give you the opportunity to ask any questions during the consultation. These will take place in July, after the general election, exact dates to be confirmed shortly.

Three month record high recovery figures

Statistics From RCR

Video recordings of a number of rescues in east London and Manchester, and on the rivers Avon, Soar, Witham and Great Ouse, can be viewed on RCR's official You Tube channel [youtube.com/@rivercanalrescue6450](https://www.youtube.com/@rivercanalrescue6450)

Unprecedented rainfall levels, water surges and numerous flood warnings resulted in River Canal Rescue (RCR) responding to more major incidents in the first three months of this year, than it did for the whole of 2023.

Between January and March, its teams responded to 155 major incidents (emergency situations either involving submerged, partially sunken or grounded craft, plus salvage work); in 2023 the figure for the year was 121.

The extreme weather conditions, which included storms Agnes, Babet, Ciaran, Debi, Elin, Fergus, Gerri, Henk, Isha and Jocelyn hit-

ting the UK between September 23 and January 24, tested RCR recovery teams who were unable to raise submerged boats and free land-locked vessels until water levels reduced and the rivers/canals were safe to enter.

Managing director, Stephanie Horton comments: "This has been a very challenging time for our teams; our ethos is to help people as soon as we can, but in some cases the weather and recovery conditions wouldn't allow us to do so. Thankfully, all vessels are recovered now, but many of the cases are heart-breaking where people have lost their homes and possessions."



RCR rescue the Old Lady

Mentions in the Houses

In The Lords

Baroness Jones of Moulsecomb, Green, asked His Majesty's Government whether they have a plan for Thames Water and other water companies if they fail.



Lord Douglas-Miller, The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs responded:

My Lords, I declare my interests as in the register. As set out in statute, if a water company became insolvent or were in serious breach of its principal statutory duties or an enforcement order, it would enter special administration. The statutory purpose of special administration is to ensure that the company continues to operate and that customers continue to receive their water and wastewater services.

Baroness Jones: I thank the Minister for his Answer, but it does not sound like much of a plan—there is not much detail there. I declare an interest as a member of the advisory board of River Action. I will put a plan forward; I am happy to share it with the Government because it is better than that one. The plan is that, as soon as any water company fails—and several are looking as if they are on that path now—we take it back into public ownership. We do not make taxpayers and bill payers pay extortionate amounts—we would keep it very cheap; I can explain how—and we stop the pollution as soon as possible, because we have all had enough.

Lord Dubs Labour added: My Lords, the wording of the Question is “if they fail”. Does the Minister agree that on seeing on our television sets the excrement coming into our streams and rivers so frequently, most people in the country would



say that the water companies had already failed?

Ed: Needless to say he didn't entirely agree

In the Commons

Rachael Maskell
Labour/Co-operative,
York Central

Asked the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, what assessment he has made of the potential impact of (a) sewage and (b) other contaminants in the river system on the food chain.



Robbie Moore The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs replied:



The Government's Storm Overflows Discharge Reduction Plan (SODRP) was extended in 2023 with further stringent targets on the use of storm overflows to protect people and the environment, prioritising for early action areas used for bathing, for growing shellfish, or with high ecological importance.

This plan will eliminate ecological harm from all storm sewage discharges by 2050, protecting biodiversity, the ecology of our rivers and seas, and the public health of our water users for generations to come.

Ed: That's 26 years away - unlikely I'll live long enough to see it!

In addition to the formulation of the SODRP, we produced an impact assessment which assesses the quality of evidence regarding environmental, public health and social impacts of storm overflow operation.

The SODRP targets will be reviewed in 2027 when new information is available to see if water companies can go further or faster.

Closing waterways is our last resort says Canal & River Trust

For further information about Fund Britain's Waterways contact: info@fundbritainswaterways.org.uk



An open and frank discussion took place between representatives from the Fund Britain's Waterways (FBW) coalition and senior representatives of the Canal & River Trust as the Trust answered questions from FBW about its current strategy, future plans and the value for money it provides in managing its 2000-mile inland waterway network.

During the meeting held at Hatton Locks, Warwickshire, the Chief Executive of the Canal & River Trust, Richard Parry, said that despite the growing funding gap created by diminishing government

grant, high inflation and the need to mitigate the impacts of climate change, the Trust had no current plans to close any of its waterways to navigation. However, he warned that the government funding announced for the period 2027–2037 will be insufficient to safeguard the future of the waterways.

This is why the Trust is calling for that planned grant to be reviewed. In the meantime, the Trust said it was making every effort to reduce the increasing funding gap by maximising its income from fundraising and other sources, including its property endowment.

FBW welcomed the fact that the Trust saw canal closures as a last resort. The FBW campaign will continue to highlight the public value provided by Britain's entire network of inland waterways, in terms of both economic and social benefits, and press the government to intervene with a fairer funding settlement for all waterways before a tipping point is reached when closures could become unavoidable.

Les Etheridge, Chair of FBW, said: "It was reassuring to hear that Canal & River Trust is not currently planning to close any waterways to navigation. As the government discovered in the 1960s, closing waterways does not save money as ongoing maintenance is required for safety purposes yet most of the economic, environmental and well-being benefits are lost. We need the next government to understand this fact and recognise the substantial value our canals and rivers currently provide."



FBW brings together a wide range of organisations with the sole purpose of campaigning collectively for an increase in government funding of Britain's inland waterways to avert their decline. Established in June 2023, it already has over 130 members representing hundreds of thousands of users and supporters of inland waterways

Join the Campaign

FBW are looking for local groups to organise events to spread the word that waterways need to be properly funded to stop them from falling into decline. Events can be as simple as a few boats gathered together at a "public" location where flyers can be handed out and people be encouraged to sign the FBW petition or get more involved.

If you or your organisation could arrange an event however small, please contact Hazel Owen hazelowen.awcc@outlook.com or 07929 204811.

Please also contact Hazel if you can help promote the FBW cause at any events you are involved in throughout the year.



Photo: Kev Maslin

The decline of cruising on the inland waterways

By Nick Roberts

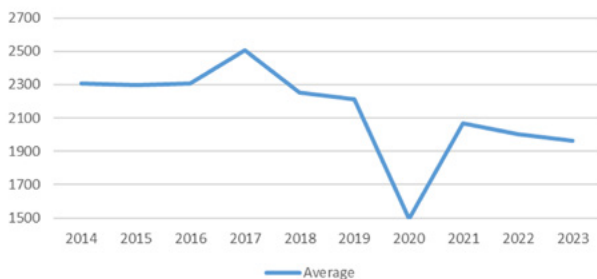
In 2017, the mean lock usage on CRT waters was 2,505, in 2023, the mean lock usage on CRT waters was 1,965. That's a 21.5% drop in lock use in 6 years.

A fluke of statistics?

Maybe, certainly the 2017 figure was a high, just as the "Regions" went from 11 to the present 6, but if you ignore the COVID lockdown "dip" which confuses the picture, its been a constant fall ever since, confirmed by the headline figures used in CRT's own annual lockage reports (see Graph 1)

Graph 1

Average lock use across CRT waterways 2014 to 2023



Is it the same everywhere?

Pretty much. Each region has different numbers, London & South East has seen a 34% drop while Yorkshire & North East has seen only 10%, but all have dropped. Again this is a fairly consistent drop disturbed by the lockdown, and possibly by some years of drought in some regions, since 2017 (see Graph 2)

There ARE flaws in these statistics that I'm sure a proper mathematician could drive a tank through—but the overall trend IS down—and down quite a lot.

CRT tells us boat numbers are up. There are two numbers to be found for boats on CRT waters in any year, the number of boats CRT find in the Annual Boat Count each year and the number of boats they sell licences to. Both numbers **are** up but, if we assume the numbers in various CRT reports for total licensed boats is correct, the number has gone from around 30,600 in 2017 to around 35,000 in 2023, an increase of just over 14%?

So, boat numbers **are** up, yet the number of times locks are getting used is down.

Apparently so! We can link these together to try to make sense of what is happening...

- In 2017 for every CRT licensed boat, there were around 122 lock movements reported.
- In 2023 for every CRT licensed boat, there were around 90 lock movements reported.

That's a 26% drop in how many locks fills there are per licensed boat since 2017, This sounds like a big drop across the whole system, what does it all mean? It feels like the canals aren't being used as they used to be. Is that important and what's causing it?

- More folk living on board who don't go far?—and don't want to go even that far?
- Conflict between different boater communities?
- An ageing cruising boating community?
- Stoppages increasing?—Is there a link to the change in CRT regions 2016/17?

- Water shortages?
- Economic pressures—changes in retirement ages?
- Others?

Probably all the above are playing a part, if so is there anything that should be done to reverse this trend? If the trend cannot be reversed shouldn't there be a review of how the canal amenities are distributed and used to cater for this change of use?

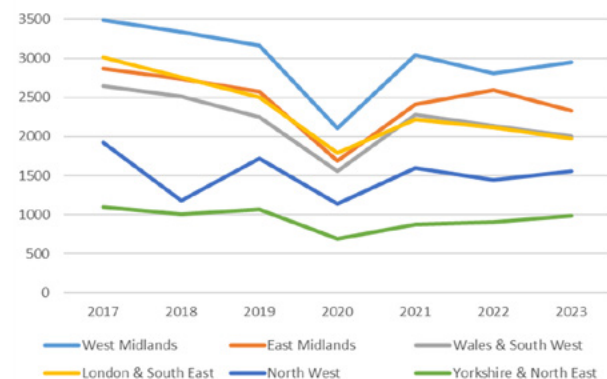
For example is the term "Continuous Cruiser" still relevant? Perhaps we now have "Cruisers who want to cruise" and "Cruisers who don't want to cruise". Both are presently labelled "Continuous Cruisers", both should be paying licence fees and be equally able to use the canals as they want to use them. There is conflict already occurring over things like visitor moorings. We need a proper review of where this trend is taking us, sitting alongside the funding discussion already going on.

The CRT explanation for their statistics.

The Canal & River Trust's National Boat Count conducted in the spring each year, has seen a 1.4% drop in boat numbers on its network across England and Wales. It also saw a 1.2% increase in unlicensed boats, meaning licence compliance now stands at 91.8%.

Nationally, 32,602 boats were recorded on the Trust's enforceable waters, down by 479*. This is the first reduction recorded since the formation of the Trust, with the drop in boat numbers most significant in the London & South East region, where there were 512 fewer boats than last year.

Similarly, the increase in unlicensed boats was most prominent in London & South East, where the caseload and backlog in the legal system has been exacerbated by va-



cancies in the local team.

Across the network, the total number of boats with a home mooring has decreased by 3.7% while the total number of continuously cruising boats has increased by 4.9%.

Matthew Symonds, head of customer service support at Canal & River Trust, said: "Boating remains popular, but our national count paints a picture of the challenges facing many on the water. The overall drop in licence compliance continues the post-pandemic trend, with the cost-of-living increases being a challenge for many in society. The reduction in home moorers and increase in continuous cruisers may also point towards the wider economic environment. We do everything we can to support boaters who are struggling to stay on the water, and our boat licence customer support team and dedicated boater welfare team work with boaters to find solutions, including accessing available benefits for those living afloat on low incomes. We urge boaters who are struggling to talk to us as soon as possible. The income from licence fees represents about 11% of the income we have each year to invest in keeping the canal network open and navigable. I'd like to thank boaters for their continued support

Graph 2

Lock use across the six CRT regions from 2017

as we face up to the challenges of an ageing canal network exposed to ever more damaging effects of extreme weather brought about by climate change.”

Despite the boat licence customer support team’s best efforts to resolve matters, on occasion, when all other avenues have been exhausted, the Trust takes action to remove boats. In the last financial year, 106 unlicensed

boats were removed from the network including many abandoned.”

* The National Boat Count is a physical sighting of boats carried out by the Trust’s towpath teams during March. Where boat numbers have changed nationally, it means that these boats are no longer on the Trust’s waters. Where boat numbers have changed in a region, it could also mean that a boat has cruised out of one region into another.

Area	Compliance 2024 (%)	2023 boat numbers CRT licences required	2024 boat numbers CRT licences required	Year-on-year % change in boat numbers	2024 all boat numbers including private marinas
East Midlands	94.5	5197	5321	2.4	6275
West Midlands	95.6	7724	7531	-2.5%	8258
North West	93.9	5981	5979	0	6091
Yorkshire & North East	91.9	3276	3364	2.7	3391
Wales & South West	94.5	3664	3680	0.4	4438
London & South East	82.1	7239	6727	-7.1	6770
Total	91.8	33081	32602	-1.4	35223





Cotswold Canals Trust



Phase 1B

Good progress has been made in recent weeks in the section of canal west of Pike Lock. Following successful translocation of the water voles from this section, the canal banks have been scraped clear of vegetation (so the voles are disinclined to return). In addition, the canal sides have been profiled.

Volunteers have started to remove the debris from the bottom of Pike Lock, near the bottom of Spring Hill, Eastington, with the help of Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust, hundreds of fish were removed and rehomed. We can then insert the stop planks and refill the newly profiled section. Work will soon start on Dock Lock, the next lock to the west, in particular reinstating the original spill weir.

Several Trustees recently attended The 2024 Annual Restoration Conference, jointly organised by The

Inland Waterways Association and Canal & River Trust. This took place at the University of Northampton with the theme 'Connected Working in Restoration', exploring the challenges and opportunities of working in partnership and maintaining positive relationships with a wide range of stakeholders given the current funding restraints.

The conference is always great opportunity to meet with other canal societies and share experiences and ideas and attend the various presentations from speakers and breakout workshops.

This year, CCT held their very own workshop led by Lisa Mant, Company Secretary and General Manager, with assistance of Aimee Malcolm, Communications Director, with the focus of the workshop on running a campaign and managing membership for a large organisation with only a small team.

Stroud Canal

Photo: Cotswold Canals Trust

His Majesty King Charles III confirmed as Patron of Canal & River Trust

The Canal & River Trust, the charity caring for the 250-year-old canal network in England and Wales, is honoured that His Majesty King Charles III has announced his Patronage following a review of Royal Patronages conducted after His Majesty's accession to the throne.

As the former Prince of Wales, His Majesty had previously been the Canal & River Trust's Patron since the charity was founded in 2012.

His Majesty has had a long interest in waterways and even rolled up his sleeves to work as a volunteer, helping to revitalise seven miles of the Montgomery Canal nearly 50 years ago.

Over the years His Majesty has officially visited the canal network several times, from a visit to the National Waterways Museum in 1988 to meeting young volunteers taking part in conservation work on Stoke on Trent's canals in 2014. Most recently, the Canal & River Trust hosted

him on the revitalised Coventry Canal in 2021.

Long dedicated to canal restoration, in 2001 His Majesty officially opened Standedge Visitor Centre following the renovation of the Standedge Tunnel*. He visited the Kennet & Avon Canal in 2003 to celebrate its completed restoration, and, in 2018, represented the Canal & River Trust by opening the first phase of the restored Cotswold Canals.

David Orr, chair at Canal & River Trust, said: "We are delighted that His Majesty will retain his Patronage of the Canal & River Trust. As a passionate advocate for British heritage, nature and communities and a long-standing supporter of the nation's waterways, His Majesty's support will be welcomed by our supporters as we continue in our mission to Keep Canals Alive."

* see CRT advice opposite





CRT Advice on Standedge

Book your passage, you can steer your own boat through Standedge Tunnel, under your own power, as long as one of our tunnel chaperones is aboard. Find out everything you need to know before you visit. Once you have decided which passage you wish to book, log on or register to the online licensing portal then go to the 'Bookings' section.

If you don't have access to the internet don't worry, you can still call us on 0303 040 4040 or call your local waterway office and we will happily book your passage for you.

Marsden to Diggle

Boats are asked to moor just past lock 42E on the day before passage and not to proceed past the second railway bridge until after 5pm. This is to avoid collision with the Standedge Tunnel Passenger Vessel which will be operating past this point until 5pm.

After 5pm boats can moor at the tunnel entrance ready for their passage the following day. Passage preparations will start at 8am the next day.

The flight of locks from 32E to 42E is not cur-

rently assisted and as such it is important that care is taken when travelling up the flight to minimise water loss. Please ensure all paddles are closed after use.

If you have any difficulties on the flight, please phone 03030 404040 for assistance. Please do not try to run water down from above without Trust assistance. Running water from the summit pound may result in boats becoming stuck in the tunnel or tunnel transit being postponed.

Please note there are no pump-out facilities at the visitor centre, only a water point.

Diggle to Marsden

Boats are asked to be at the Diggle portal for 10.30am on the day of passage

Once through the tunnel, boats are welcome to moor above lock 42E for a maximum of 24 hours. Please note, there are no facilities at these locations.

Boat dimensions: maximum length 70' (21.34m), maximum width 6' 10" (2.08m), maximum height above water 6' 2" (1.88m), maximum draught below water 3' 3" (0.99m).

Boat steering and propulsion

Advice from [River Canal Rescue](#)

Steering

The steering mechanism is very simple; a tiller connected to a curved 's' shaped steel bar, known as a 'swan neck', that fits into a flat rudder protruding out the back of the boat. To stop the tiller wobbling, there's a top bearing at the base where it joins the protruding rudder.



Fouled propellor
All photos: RCR

What can go wrong?

Rudder - catching the rudder or 'popping out of the cup' (as it refers to the rudder lifting out of its locating joint), making the vessel difficult to steer.

While this is rarely damaging, it can be difficult to re-insert the rudder once dislocated. If damage does occur it usually affects either the skeg (support beam extending from the bottom of the boat), or the top bearing (ensures smooth steering).

Unfortunately, there's nothing you can do to avoid damaging the skeg, apart from being diligent and ensuring you position your vessel correctly in the lock. However, you can avoid damage to the top bearing

by removing the retaining or grub screws. Their function is to stop the shaft slipping inside the bearing, however on a narrowboat this isn't necessary.

If you leave these screws in and catch the rudder, the shaft will not travel freely which may result in smashing the bearing or warping the whole rudder assembly (which permanently damages the steering). By removing these screws, you stop the pressure transferring to other components, avoiding a potential large bill.

The shaft can wear out, if it's a split shaft design with two sections (a hollow square profile tube fixed to the bottom half and a solid square profile shaft fixed to the top half). If there's play in the steering (ie having to move the tiller a bit before it moves the rudder), the shaft may be worn and need replacing or repairing.

Tiller—this may wobble or vibrate when cruising, indicating the top bearing is worn and needs replacing.

Swan neck—this may become loose from the rudder assembly, meaning that when it moves, the rudder doesn't. To put right, locate the central bolt at the base of the swan neck (it pinches the swan neck into a tapered shaft), centralise the swan neck to where the rudder's pointing and tighten down the bolt (do not overtighten as if the bolt shears, it can be expensive to repair).

If there's an issue with steering, it's either a replacement job or the boat needs to come out of the water for further investigation.

Propulsion

Propulsion components are; propeller, prop shaft, stern gland, a thrust-bearing coupling, gear box and engine mounts.

Propeller—if you hear odd noises, experience vibration or lack direction, the propeller may be bent, chipped or damaged. If you hit something and hear a humming/whistling/grinding noise this suggests the prop is misshapen in some way. If left undiagnosed, the vibration can cause the stern gland to leak or be damaged.



Prop shaft—If damaged (bent), the propeller will oscillate, putting pressure on the stern gland and potentially causing excessive wear or damage beyond repair. The shaft can bend if you hit something.

If the propeller protrudes more than the width of the shaft it will need adjusting (best to ask an engineer as it usually requires a coupling adjustment).

Stern gland—also known as the stern gear. There's a general misconception that stern glands stop water coming in, so naturally people want them as tight as possible. But there needs to be a small amount of water in order to cool the prop shaft. If over-tightened, it causes friction on the turning shaft which creates overheating. If left undiagnosed this

will wear away the 'packing' sections of the shaft. If wear occurs, the stern gland will leak more and increase the chance of prop-shaft damage (applies to traditional stern glands not stern seals).

To test if your stern gland's overheating, after an hour's cruising, check if it's hot. If it is, the gland's too tight.

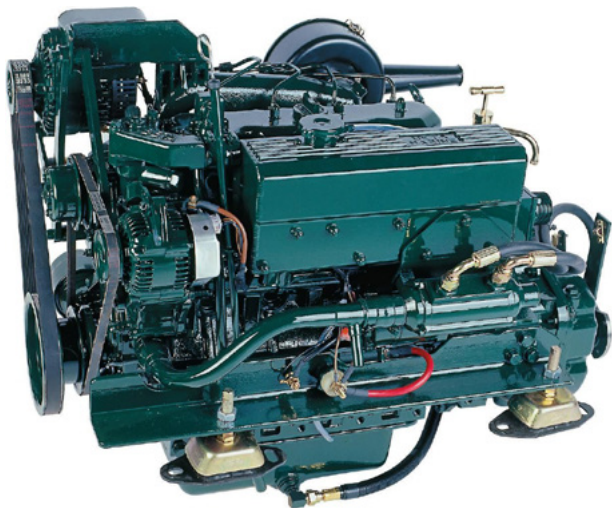
Couplings—components that connect/bolt the propeller shaft to the engine. If they're loose, any movement will either shear them off, resulting in loss of propulsion, or elongating the coupling bolt holes. Eventually the coupling will need to be replaced, and you may even have to change your prop shaft or gearbox if the coupling has damaged them. A simple check before each journey will stop this happening.



Drive plate
Opposite: Gearbox and prop shaft

Gearbox/Drive Plates—If you hit an underwater object, the drive plate is usually the first victim. However, if you damage the drive plate, it's unlikely you've damaged the gear box. General wear and tear impacts gearboxes, and because canal boats don't have a clutch arrangement, it's important to go easy and regularly service them.

Engine Mounts—these impact all the above-mentioned components and if not maintained, can cause extensive damage. Check by



looking from above whether the top nuts are touching the engine legs.

The top nuts are set to the correct alignment and should not be touched or tampered with. If there's a disconnect between the top nut and engine leg, use the nut below the engine leg to make adjustments. Tighten the **bottom** nut until it compresses the engine leg onto the top nut. This re-aligns the engine and will prevent further damage. Check

regularly and if in doubt, ask an engineer for help.

Common problems

People often catch their mooring ropes around the propeller, so if they drop into the water, take the boat out of gear to prevent them being swallowed.

Avoid shallow water and be mindful what can lurk beneath you—we're often called to remove industrial fencing, barbed and razor wire, mattresses and tyres from propellers.

Be aware of the dangers of rudders—if you clip the rudder while turning, it will swing the rudder around which in turn impacts the swan neck, causing it to change direction. If you're standing to the side of the tiller, rather than in front where you should be, you could be knocked off your feet by the sudden movement. Worse still, thrown overboard, you could end up crushed between the tiller and obstacle, and if the vessel's in gear, the boat could travel over you. Stand forward of the tiller when making tight manoeuvres.

NABO needs more members to be able to mount higher profile campaigns. Although we are seeing large numbers of boaters signing up we would welcome more.

If you are experiencing difficulties boating, problems joining, or you have questions please do ask admin@nabo.org.uk. We will do our very best to respond quickly!



Tourism Taxes

Ian Hutson

Here's an easy little money-raising wheeze. A "Heritage Holiday Levy". The hire companies can absorb it, or they can disown responsibility and pass it on. Let's dig out Baby's First Abacus by TOMYTM and pluck some plausible figures from the air.

Let's guess at there being only half the number of holiday hire boats having a smashing time as there are boats upon which folk live full-time. Three thousand or so. Let's remember fondly when the hire-boat season was perhaps thirty weeks a year, try to expunge from our consciousness that in some areas it's now just about fifty-two weeks a year, and we'll settle on a season of perhaps forty weeks per year.

Hiring holiday narrowboats is not cheap. It's on the order of £1,500 per week, more and less.

Non-medicated grown-ups will be able to take a better stab at the figures than can I.

The Canal Company Charity Ltd isn't shy about using generous or imaginative figures, you've only got to look at their interpretations of "boater surveys" and "statistics" to see that. Above-inflation increases year on year and a surcharge of 25% for narrow-beam live-aboard boaters is something that doesn't bother them one iota. So let's show them the way and make this proposed Heritage Holiday Levy very small in comparison, let's make it just 10%. Half the rate of VAT. Half the rate of Basic Income Tax. Half the rate of a respectable tip in a restaurant.

That gives us maybe 3,000 hire boats for possibly 40 weeks a year at

an average levy, ish, of £150.

My abacus calculates that to be £18,000,000 per annum. Tasty. Very tasty indeed.

Tourism Taxes are nothing new. They're becoming very popular indeed with the Robber Barons running entire countries, so no reason why the—um—Caretakers of the Canal System ought to feel coy about introducing something similar for our commercial cousins' boating activities. From Bali to Venice, Bulgaria to Japan, there's a tourism tax levied. Even Wales is doing it.

Tourism Taxes are nicely glossed over with notions such as it being voluntary (you don't have to holiday) and their being "green" (helping to preserve infrastructure). Everyone pays for parking in the Lake District, we all spend money in the cafes and gift shops of the National Trust and no-one ever spends much time analysing the minutiae of the charges on our airline tickets and hotel reservations, life being too short, the holiday fun looming, and all of us inured to imaginative administrative "add-ons".

At the moment the holiday hire companies don't exactly open a corporate vein vis a vis paying their fleets' fair shares. Less than double an "ordinary" civilian boat annual licence fee per holiday hire boat? It's not a very respectable contribution really, is it? A levy would relieve their shame a little.

Of course, this sort of measure would require a demonstration that the canal administration is not utterly dominated by corporate hire interests and over-representation. That might be difficult... JMHO.



Waiting for Repair, Wardle Lock, Middlewich
Photo: Ian Hutson

People

by Steve Teratsia



DIARY OF A GONGOOZLER

Nothing particularly topical to report this time around as I was feeling a bit wonky during February and March... Nothing serious but it's just a little unwanted 'gift' I get occasionally after having the displeasure of sepsis in 2022.

Enough of my ailments though, and to be fair I'm now feeling well enough to get back out there poking my camera at things that are none of my business.

On the whole, I get a great reaction from passing boaters... A nod, a wave, and even the offer of a brew occasionally if they're moored. However, I can't claim 100% success in winning boaters over.

One that immediately springs to mind was the chappie heading south on the Staffs & Worcs last summer. I won't name the exact location.

I'd already reeled off a few shots as his boat approached, and as I was getting in a better position I could hear him yelling.

As he drew close he moored the boat just before the lock, and leapt off like a deranged ape and began stomping towards me. I'm pretty sure he was actually foaming at the mouth!

Now I can swear like good 'un, but this feller was the Olympic Champion of profanity. I had to then endure a tirade of flying spittle before he could even get his words out.

"It's not a ***** sideshow, it's my home and I don't want anyone taking pictures of it".

"OK" I replied, "Not a problem, I won't take any more photos... Now run along and get on with your life".

"I want you to delete the ones

you've already taken".

"Sure, if it bothers you that much, I'll do it later".

He then made the mistake of reaching for my camera in an attempt to delete the photos. Now I had just come out of hospital after a sepsis complication, and my weight was down to around 10 stones. He was at that time almost twice my weight. However, as precious as he was over his boat, I'm probably ten times more protective about my camera gear...

To cut a long story short I met fire with fire and shouted in his face using the very language that he seemed so fluent in. I don't think he was expecting that, and thankfully he backed off when I began giving him a taste of his own medicine.

He then vainly tried to justify his outburst by saying that most boaters would do the same... Well, I informed him that in the seven odd years I've been aiming my lenses at boats I've never once had a negative experience. "It must just be me then", he floundered, "I'm probably just a bit of a ****hole".

I just walked away calmly and muttered "If the cap fits..."

I'm a bit slow on the uptake at times, and it was only once I got back to the car that I wondered if he'd actually pilfered the boat and was worried that I had photographic evidence.

Suppose I'll never know, but one thing is for sure... I've gained my weight and strength since then, and if we should cross paths again then he can have the pointy bit of my camera tripod inserted where the sun doesn't shine!

There was also one boater who made it a point of telling me how rubbish my camera gear was, and that 'real' photographers use film cameras, not this modern digital trash. So it looks like I'll be getting a Kodak Instamatic in the near future. In fact I have just bought an old SLR film camera for nostalgia's sake, but with the cost of film and processing these days it will be a rare treat when

that comes out of the bag.

Had a few 'interesting conversations' with the odd cyclist too, but that's nothing out of the norm from what I read on the Facebook groups. In the main though, I've found them to be mostly polite and considerate.

As always, many thanks for reading my incoherent ramblings, and of course...

Stay safe out there!

Festivals

Bradley Canal Restoration Society annual rally

Saturday 15th June at CRT Bradley Workshops. This is now becoming an annual event that helps promote their restoration plans and gets a heavy local involvement with the surrounding community. BCRS would naturally appreciate support, please let them know if you are able to assist at the event.

Booking details: bradleycanal.co.uk



Gnosall C-Fest 2024 (19-21 July)

- Trading craft boats
- More than five bands over three days at our great pubs
- Historic working boats
- Local canal societies
- Gnosall canal history exhibition
- Public boat trips.

More details and boat booking cfest.gnosall@gmail.com

Bringing to life the Venice of the Midlands

Boat and trade entries are now being invited for the Tipton Canal & Community Festival on 21-22 September 2024.

free-4210357.webador.co.uk/boat-trade-entries



Gnosall C-Fest



Come to our 3-day community festival along Gnosall's beautiful canal

Take a boat trip from the festival garden

Visit the floating market

Enjoy our local pubs - live music and refreshments

Learn about local canals and their history

View historic working boats

19-21 July 2024

Organised by
Gnosall Tipton Canal Restoration
www.gnosallcanalfestival.co.uk



Rewind

Issue No 3 2009

Howard Anguish reviews NABO News from 15 years ago.



BW had announced that they had convinced the Government that they were indeed the right custodian for its non-operational canalside properties, with appropriate conditions and responsibilities, mainly consisting of greater separation between operational and property commercial—a welcome piece of news and which hopefully would lead to better accountability. The announcement came with some conditions as follows: -

“The next step is for British Waterways to work with governments on the practicalities of setting up a wholly-owned BW subsidiary to develop its property management further. The decision follows a detailed study of BR’s canalside property endowment in England and Wales by BW (and others). The study recognised British Waterways’ track record of success in delivering both revenue and wider public benefits from the non-operational property in its ownership. It recommended that the property should be moved into a wholly-owned BW subsidiary to enhance BW’s focus on optimising returns from its property...”

In the Chairman’s column, David Fletcher comments that Council had received a first draft of a consultation paper on Mooring and Licensing issues; more to come. He also discusses the perennial issue of Continuous Moorers and licence evasion numbers which had reached 3500 boats with around 70% - 2500 - not following the guidelines. Together with some boats on home moorings that amounts to around 4000 boats on the canals who are

not playing by the rules. On the subject of licence evasion, David reports “Evasion. In the SE region, all of the 300 or so boats without a licence now have proceedings taking place at some level costing both money and occasional collateral damage due to errors in enforcement. One of our Council members had a letter of apology from a director after a recent error. I gather the tone of the BW enforcement correspondence is also judged to be quite aggressive. If you get such letters, do send us a copy.” (The Council member in question was me!)

BW announced a stop press “BW To Re-organise again”—the latest in BW’s attempt to justify its existence and to save its bacon in the light of the forthcoming change to charity status, although in 2009 it was a very long way from becoming a firm decision.

The main proposal was to re-structure BW’s internal operation structure in England and Wales, with the creation of 11 smaller, ‘hands-on’ waterway units, including the removal of a full layer of management, and after consultation, around 100 redundancies from office staff. Included in the announcement was the comment that additional focus will be put on working with volunteers and local communities while also creating a new regeneration directorate to build on the ability of the waterways to kickstart regeneration, and also to contribute to social inclusion.

This important late addition to this edition of NABO News will without doubt be discussed in the next edition.

NABO News back issues are available online at nabo.org.uk/nabo-news-back-copies/

CALLING ALL PRIVATE BOAT OWNERS AND BOAT CLUBS

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The Jubilee Pageant by Tim Lewis

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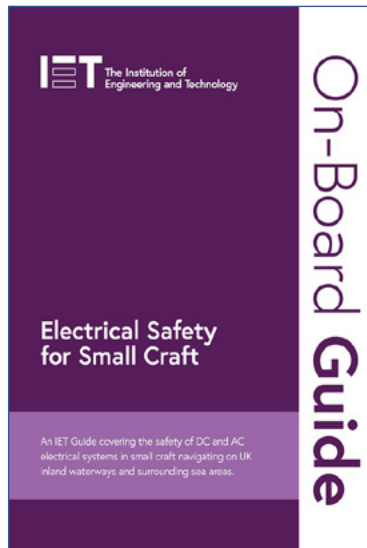
Safety Advice for Small Craft

The IET has announced the release of the “On-Board Guide for Electrical Safety for Small Craft”, which was initiated by NABO and the production undertaken in consultation with representatives from many boating and related organisations.

Small craft have an ever-increasing amount of electrical equipment, systems, and associated power requirements. As a result, significantly more risks and safety concerns need to be considered in the design and testing of electrical installations on small recreational and commercial craft.

The IET’s new On-Board Guide provides practical advice on the design, installation, testing, commissioning, and maintenance of electrical installations on small recreational and commercial craft. It summarises the existing standards and directives relative to this sector and covers key areas such as electrical supplies (including batteries and AC power sources) as well as design guidance, cable requirements, electrical protection and testing.

To get your copy today theiet.org/SmallCraft-NABO.



What’s Happening to Customer Service Facilities?

Over the past year, across the network, over 70 of the Trust’s pump out machines have been upgraded to contactless payment.

There are several areas across the canal network where the Trust wants to increase services, with 19 spots requiring Elsan provision and 12 needing refuse facilities. The charity will work with partners to fill these gaps, which may include making agreements with the providers of existing private facilities to open them to all boaters.

To help fund improvements at existing facilities or to provide additional facilities the Trust must look at the viability of services in areas with over provision. In these locations, service points that are repeatedly affected by ongoing problems such as fly tipping and vandalism, and non-essential services such as toilets and showers, may also close if damage or vandalism makes the cost of repair prohibitive.

Finally, in compliance with new Welsh Assembly waste legislation, the Trust is required to provide separated waste and recycling facilities in Wales. To accommodate this within existing budgets, waste sites on the Monmouthshire

& Brecon Canal will be consolidated, and the Trust proposes introducing a new facility at Goytre Wharf. There will be no changes on the Llangollen Canal.

Matthew Symonds, head of customer service at Canal & River Trust, said: “We are committed to providing the best possible boater facilities that we can afford. While the vast majority of our investment is to keep the network flowing and available for navigation, this year we will continue to spend around £2 million on boater facilities, with all but pump-outs free at the point of use.

“With finances so tight and the fight to Keep Canals Alive at the fore, it’s important to make the best possible use of our resources, making facilities more reliable, cutting back a few services where there are alternatives in nearby cruising range, and redoubling efforts to fill any gaps against our policy.”

For more information on the Customer Service Facilities Policy please visit: Customer services facilities policy | Canal & River Trust (canalrivertrust.org.uk).

Letters to the Editor

Opinions expressed here are independent of NABO policy and statements made have not been verified as accurate.

Electric boats

I happened today to be looking at the CRT page explaining how to calculate the cost of licensing a 'boat'. I saw nothing about electric or hybrid boats. There's also no explicit information on anything that is not a narrowboat or 'widebeam'. So nothing on tenders, canoes, paddleboard, trolling dinghies, etc. The focus is on 'normal' boats. Such incomplete information not only leaves questions, I confess that it also annoys me! It's really not difficult to provide the full picture rather than half of it. Ed: It's on a scroll-down part of the online licensing page where it says 'discounts' but not easy to find.

Andy Williams

The facts are that CRT's latest figures published in its January 2024 board papers show it has just 27,106 Friends. CRT admit it will fail to meet its year end target of 30,000.

To put this in context, CRT's ten year strategy contains a page documenting "Our ambitions for 2025". One of those ambitions states "A well-supported charity with around 100,000 regular individual donors ..."

CRT claims success but the fact is that the Friends scheme continues, year on year, to be a disaster.

Allan Richards

Fact checking CRT's Friends claim

I refer to last issues Chair's column:

"I feel we could benefit from a BBC type fact checking service when reading the report of CRT's recent meeting at Westminster. CRT state that around 60 people turned up to listen, some were MP's but the rest were members of the House of Lords and others from 'partner organisations' so, in fact, not many MP's from the 650 in the House."

Perhaps I may be allowed to run a "fact check" on CRT's earlier claim in the article,

"Funding issues included the success of fundraising which apparently has now attracted over 40,000 Friends, with a high proportion of those being boaters."

I name this boat ...

If you have spotted a boat name while cruising that made you smile, please send a photo to the editor.



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